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Interview With Arnold Horelick, Former Chief Analyst of Soviet Affairs for the CIA

What Worries Soviets, U.S. About an Arms Pact

For the superpowers, success at Geneva means more than cutting back on missiles, says the head of the Rand/UCLA Center for the Study of Soviet International Behavior.

Q. Mr. Horelick, how do you assess the nuclear arsenals of the superpowers?

A. The 1970s in particular was a decade of steady, uninterrupted growth in Soviet military power relative to the United States. Some of this was inevitable. U.S. nuclear superiority of the 1950s and 1960s was bound to erode as the Soviets acquired large, survivable nuclear forces. But the Soviet buildup in the 1970s went far beyond this. Even while they continued to abide by the quantitative restrictions of the SALT I and SALT II treaties, the Soviets not only eroded U.S. strategic nuclear superiority but also acquired forces that raised questions about the survivability of the U.S. land-based ICBM force.

The chief U.S. concern since the late 1970s has been the fear that American intercontinental ballistic missiles—the Minuteman force—could be wiped out by a Soviet missile attack while the Soviets withheld weapons that could strike American cities. Those U.S. ICBM's are the most capable "leg" of what's called the "nuclear triad"—the combination of land-based missiles, nuclear-missile-carrying submarines and intercontinental bombers. Now, the Soviet "Minuteman attack" scenario is not in my view very plausible, but there is wide agreement that it is highly undesirable for a major portion of a country's nuclear force—as the ICBM's are for the United States—to be vulnerable to such a disarming attack.

The insistence of the Soviet Union until now on maintain-

Trimming Nuclear Arsenals—the Kremlin View

What does the Soviet Union see as the key points of contention on arms control? In a recent interview in Moscow with Mortimer B. Zuckerman, Chairman and Editor-in-Chief of U.S.News & World Report, a leading general who serves as a senior adviser to the Soviet general staff outlined his country's position. He asked that he remain anonymous.

■ **Star Wars.** *"Frankly, the Soviet Union is not worried so much about the prospect of America deploying an anti-ballistic-missile system, because the Soviet Union will find a response to neutralize this danger."*

In the Soviet analyst's view, the existence of even a limited ABM system creates an incentive for the other side to take countermeasures, thus inducing a new round in the arms race. The Soviet Union says it is worried about stockpiling mountains of weapons upon weapons. General Secretary Gorbachev talked about the necessity to go in the opposite direction to the policy of détente and the halting of the arms race.

■ **Strategic parity.** *"In the coming five to eight years, the capability of American strategic forces to destroy targets in the Soviet Union will increase 1.3 times. So I want to ask why you pay so much attention to our ICBM's."*

Currently, by Soviet count, there is no gap in Soviet and American strategic weapons. In 1985 the U.S., on all its strategic systems, has 11,000 charges; the Soviet Union, 10,000.

The Soviets' concentration on heavy missiles distresses some American analysts because those weapons are able to carry more warheads and deliver them more accurately on targets. The U.S. concentrates a heavy proportion of its nuclear weapons on submarines. The new Trident missile, to be carried aboard American subs, will be nearly as accurate and can travel almost as far to reach targets as the Soviets' land-based missiles.

■ **Arms reductions.** *"There should be an equal number of nuclear charges on both sides."*

If the Soviet Union can persuade the U.S. to halt its Star Wars program, it says it can risk cutting in half its arsenals of nuclear weapons that threaten the U.S. The U.S. must agree to cut by 50 percent its own nuclear force threatening the Soviet Union.

■ **Forward-based systems.** *"The reduction of each side's offensive nuclear forces must be applied to systems that threaten the other side."*

This principle requires that the medium-range nuclear weapons of the U.S. stationed in Europe and the nuclear bombs stored on ships that ply the oceans near the Soviet homeland must be counted as part of the force to be cut in half.

■ **U.S. allies.** *"It is our position that the French and British weapons should also be included in the overall strategic balance between the Soviet Union and NATO."*

Britain and France have fielded nuclear weapons that are under their own control and not subject to U.S. control. Those weapons are seen by Moscow as posing a threat to the Soviet Union and its socialist allies. Gorbachev in Paris recently proposed to talk directly to those governments on arms limitations.

■ **Verification.** *"We are ready to create commissions to check possible violations with voluntary or mandatory on-site inspections."*

The two sides must agree on what to verify, then see what methods are appropriate. If new types of verification are needed, the Soviet Union says it will accept them.

In the Soviet view, national means of verification can be used, as well as seismic stations, satellites and on-site inspections. There also can be provisions for international control and verification.

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ing its advantage in land-based missiles has made Americans even more suspicious. It probably intensified the search for a new technological fix—the Strategic Defense Initiative.

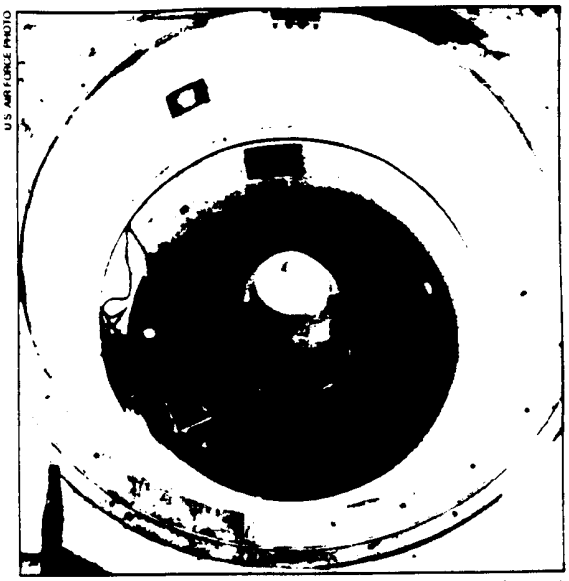
Q What, basically, is the Soviet government proposing now?

A Their new proposal would halt the Strategic Defense Initiative, the President's plan to develop defenses against nuclear missiles. It would cut the two superpowers' nuclear delivery systems by 50 percent and reduce the number of strategic nuclear warheads and bombs on the two sides by approximately half—to 6,000. And it would forbid either superpower from concentrating more than 60 percent of its nuclear warheads and bombs in any single leg of their nuclear triad. But this Soviet proposal also contains provisions that are totally unacceptable to Washington, such as counting U.S. forces based in Europe as part of our total strategic force, while excluding from the Soviet total their forces that can strike our European allies.

Q The President has said the Soviet proposal contains "seeds that we should nurture." What are they?

A The deep cuts that they've offered to take in their own forces, together with the limit on concentration, are the most novel and positive features of the current Soviet package. The 60 percent concentration rule, for example, would prevent the Soviets from protecting their ICBM's against severe reductions by cutting only the less capable components of the Soviet forces, such as their submarine-launched ballistic missiles—SLBM's—or bombers.

If there weren't such a concentration rule and you had deep reductions, the Soviets could then largely preserve their heavy land-based missile force. Currently about 70 percent of their warheads are on these land-based nuclear missiles—around 6,400 warheads. The 60 percent concentration rule would reduce the number of warheads in their ICBM force to no more than 3,600. It would also oblige the Soviets to make very substantial reductions in the throw-weight—or destructive potential—of their ICBM force, a prime objective of U.S. arms-control efforts. Such Soviet reductions, plus continuation of the U.S. strategic modernization program, would very greatly reduce the vulnerability of land-based U.S. strategic forces in the years to come. That's the promising "seed" referred to by President Reagan.



The Minuteman missile is the most capable—and most vulnerable—weapon in the U.S. nuclear force.

Q Why is the Soviet Union so threatened by the American plan to develop missile defenses?

A Moscow says that an American strategic defense could serve as a shield behind which the U.S. could launch a first strike on the Soviet Union. Behind its shield, according to this view, the U.S. might be more confident that it could protect itself from retaliation by what would remain of the Soviets' battered forces. The belief that it might escape retaliation, the Soviets argue, might cause the U.S. to act more recklessly.

In theory at least, even a moderately effective defensive shield—short of a "leakproof" system—if it were coupled to powerful offensive forces, could provide the basis for a first strike. And President Reagan acknowledged as much in the past. That's why he has raised the possibility of sharing defensive technology with the Soviets if our program outpaced theirs. The Soviets don't find this very persuasive or reassuring.

Q What will happen if there is no arms agreement?

A In my judgment, unless the process of building defenses is regulated somehow by agreement, it will touch off an intensified competition in offensive arms. The Soviets would want to insure against U.S. success in strategic defense by doing what comes easiest for them—by enlarging and improving their ICBM force. The U.S., meanwhile, still would be uncertain about the ultimate success of its Strategic Defense Initiative. So it would have to maintain its force of offensive weapons as a deterrent and respond in kind to the Soviet buildup.

In the short term, the advantage in a new round of offensive-arms buildup would probably be with the Soviets because their production lines for strategic missiles are whirring away and ours aren't. In the longer run, if SDI proves to be technically feasible, and cheaper for us to build than for the Soviets to overwhelm, the strategic advantage could begin to shift to the United States.

But for many years—perhaps decades—in an unregulated environment there would be an atmosphere of highly intensified competition, huge costs, strategic uncertainty and tension in alliances, which would add greatly to the anxieties of both sides. I think the only reliable, stable way to introduce substantial strategic defenses would be to do so in a regulated way by a mutual agreement that would control the size of offensive forces and the rate at which defenses were introduced.

Q What are the prospects for such agreements?

A The U.S. approach seems to reflect a view that both sides have an interest in moving from the present, offense-dominated strategic balance to a defense-dominated one. But the chances that the U.S. can get the Soviets to agree to that are, in my view, very low. After all, they are at a substantial disadvantage in this defensive technology. The kind of U.S.-Soviet cooperation that would be required to manage a safe transition to nuclear defenses goes far beyond anything achieved in arms control so far.

On the brighter side, it seems to me that the U.S. has improved its bargaining position and might convert that strength into an arms-control agreement more far-reaching than anything we were able to achieve in the past. We might use our advantage to get an arms agreement that cuts the Soviet offensive forces we worry about. But that would require that we provide the Soviets with incentives by offering them some near and midterm relief from the fierce competition to develop defenses, which they fear most.

Such an agreement might possibly slow down the pace of the SDI, depending on precisely where a line might be drawn between permitted research and forbidden testing and for how long. But for the duration of such an agreement, by radically reducing offenses on both sides, it would make the environment much more favorable for any future transition to defenses than it would otherwise be. And if it ultimately turned out that space-based defenses were not technically feasible or cost-effective, we would not have missed an opportunity to strengthen the stability of the offensive balance at lower levels of nuclear weapons while we were finding this out. □